

wish to be with those of every age whom we can learn from and work with. I hope that we will have the time and space to grow into a united team, with the conviction and enthusiasm to face the challenges that this new millennium will bring."

**Natalie Porter:**

"Having worked voluntarily with MRA on and off for some years, I have reached an understanding of its principles and values, and want to implement them in my life. Living this way has had an effect on my life, family and friends. It feels right to continue this commitment and be part of the next 15-20 years of MRA - part of the changes but also helping maintain the true essence of fellowship, vision and inner guidance to enlarge my world-wide community of friends."

**RAIL TRANSPORT DIALOGUE**

Last month Lord Berkeley hosted a dinner in the House of Lords for rail operators, consultants, trade unionists and politicians to hear from Lord Bradshaw, the leader of the Lib/Dem transport team. His theme: Our railways - future developments. A lively discussion followed. Lord Berkeley paid tribute to the work of The

Industrial Pioneer in bringing together all sides of the rail industry.

**Tony Thomas**

**FUTURE EVENTS**

**London,** Greencoat Place.

December 8, 3pm

*The Christmas Visit* followed by carols and Christmas tea.

**Greencoat Forum**

December 11 – 6.30 for 7.15pm

*The Cross and the Bodhi Tree* (see November Newsletter)

**Tirley Garth**

December 9 and 16, (afternoon)

Christmas Celebration. Details from Tirley.

**CD – To Sing a Story.** Available from Anne Mackay at Cammallt, Dumgoyne, Glasgow, G639LA ((£10 incl. p&p, Cheques to Anne Mackay)



**FASTS AND FEASTS**

November, December and into January is a period full of Fasts and Feasts on which we can greet our neighbours and learn what it is they celebrate.

This year the Fast of Ramadan started with the new moon in November and four weeks later the Eid al-Fitr (Break-Fast Feast) comes with the new moon before Christmas.

Just before Christmas comes also the Jewish Hanukkah, 8-day Festival of Lights, recalling the Maccabean re-dedication of the Temple. All these festivals are associated with candle-light, as also is the week-long Hindu Diwali, from November 11 on. Orthodox Christians, both

Greek and Russian, celebrate Christmas on January 6, the western Epiphany. Christmas itself offers an inclusive occasion. Few in this country know that the story of the Annunciation and the Virgin birth are related in the Qur'an, part of the many verses giving honour to

Jesus and his mother. Here is the account of the Annunciation (Qur'an 3.35) "The angels said, 'O Mary, God giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him; his name will

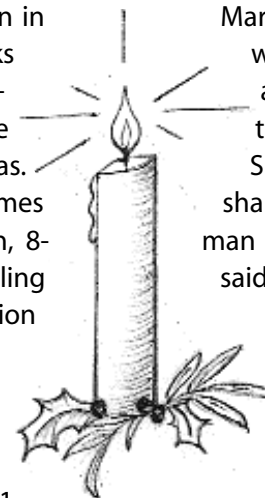
be the Messiah Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter, and of the company of those nearest to God."

She said, 'O my Lord, How shall I have a son when no man hath touched me?' He said... 'God createth what He willeth.... He but saith

to it 'Be' and it is!' The story of the birth of Jesus in the shade of a palm tree is beautifully told and

is a universal favourite, often read during Ramadan.

The flight of the Holy Family to Egypt – refugees given shelter from the violent persecution of Herod- is part of Egypt's tradition, common to Copt and Muslim alike. The tree where they rested on arrival, and the places where they sojourned,



are part of the nation's heritage. The "Virgin's Tree" on the borders of Cairo, is one of a number of sites visited not so much by tourists as by the people of the land. It is covered with small gifts, especially from women praying for healing for their children.

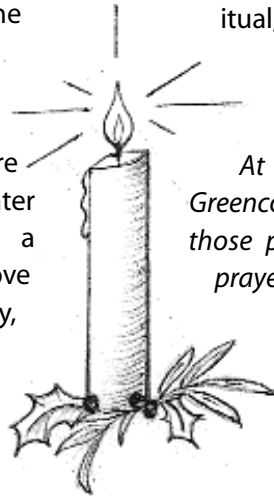
### Early tradition

Turkey treasures the home where the Virgin is said to have lived in her old age. Tradition says that St John, instructed by Jesus to care for his mother, took her in later years to Ephesus. On a wooded mountainside above the ruins of the ancient city, the traces of a first century house have been found, and round them a small church built. The place itself was only discovered 130 years ago, through the dream of a German nun. But the tradition that Mary lived in some such spot in this area is a very early one, and the peaceful house and garden and spring hold something of her spirit. Muslims honour it, and by the altar are written passages from the Gospels, the Muslim traditions and the Qur'an, in praise of the Mother of Jesus.

One Christmas Eve, the Lebanese

journal, L'Orient, carried an article which concluded: "...In the teachings of our two religions, the points that unite us are at least as profound as those that separate us. We need to become increasingly conscious of our points of encounter, as well as of our differences. A clear perception of these is a necessary condition for true brotherhood whether spiritual; or national."

**Dr Charis Waddy**



*At a recent occasion at 24 Greencoat Place, Imam Sajid led those present in the following prayer from the Holy Qur'an:*

"Lord You said and Your word is true! Love is stronger than hate.

"Goodness and evil cannot be compared. If you repel evil by good the one who hates you can become your close friend. This degree of goodness can be acquired only through patience and self-restraint."

And from the sayings of the Prophet:

"Let there be respect for the earth, peace for its people, love in our lives, delight in the good, forgiveness for our past wrongs and from now on a new start. Amen."

**STEPPING STONES**, an autobiography by Hansjorg Gareis. Hugh Nowell writes, "This new book reveals a sensitive insight into his life as a schoolboy in Hitler's Germany, the trauma of defeat in war and his subsequent encounter with MRA. A compelling read."

*A few copies are available from Grosvenor Books price £12 plus P&P £1.50.*

### A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

I walked into the Barn for a Greencoat Place Forum. The weighty title was The changing scene: The new Scottish Parliament and constitutional change in the United Kingdom given by Robert G. Hynd, a Scottish solicitor. A subject the average Canadian, like me, knows little about.

We were taken through Scottish history at breakneck speed. What really stuck in my mind was the interesting distinction between King of Scots and King of Scotland. Scottish kings have always been known as King of Scots, which means they are the King of the people as opposed to the King of the land.

In Canada, we are taught that our form of government is based on the British model. I was astonished to learn that there is no Constitution in the UK as that is the foundation on which Canadian government rests. Why this fundamental difference

isn't stressed in Canadian history courses is a mystery to me.

Much was then said about the Scottish Parliament. As a foreigner, the most interesting part was the explanation of devolution of power. Instead of making a precise list of which decisions will be taken by the Scottish Parliament and which are the purview of Westminster, devolution means that certain areas are handled by one Parliament and others, like defence, are handled by Westminster.

This was a very stimulating evening, led by an interesting and humorous presenter whose Scottish accent was a delight for a Canadian. My only complaint being that the evening was too brief for this fascinating subject.

**Eve Wojciechowska**

### THE GLOBAL HOHO (December 30 - January 20)

As the Hoho in India draws close, two from Britain write about why they are going.

#### Fiona Leggat:

"You get a different perspective on issues facing our world work when you discuss them with people from every corner of the globe. For my generation there are not many opportunities to have real fellowship or forward planning with others from different countries. But we also

Minister of Malta and his wife came to lunch. The wife of deputy Prime Minister Gonzi attended several sessions.

The climax of the Dialogue was a public meeting for a cross-section of Maltese life, and in the following three days Dialogue participants were able to meet the Prime Minister of Malta, the Auxiliary Bishop, the Imam and the Director of Malta's Islamic Centre. Others spoke at the university and were interviewed on TV and radio, and for newspaper articles.

**Josephine and Bjorn Ole Austad  
Peter and Jean Everington**

## **BRADFORD UNIVERSITY STUDENTS QUIZ MICHAEL HENDERSON**

The questions from students at Bradford University's School of Peace Studies were thoughtful and far-reaching when Michael Henderson spoke to them on the theme of his book, *Forgiveness—breaking the chain of hate*. On November 7, he was invited to speak to the School—the largest of its kind in the world—by Sierra Leone lecturer Dr David Francis. The students, undergraduates and post-graduates, were from countries ranging from Denmark to Japan. Among questions they posed: "Is forgiveness appropriate in the midst of conflict?" "What comes first, forgiveness or justice?" "How does

forgiveness build community?" "Are some countries more prone to forgiveness than others?"

Dr Francis referred to the African tradition of reconciliation and forgiveness and "the short memory of hate", termed *Ubuntu*. Nelson Mandela had been a particular example of this ability to suffer without bitterness. A Japanese post-graduate student, who had worked on development aid programmes in Ethiopia for several years, commented: "I find the notion of restorative justice helpful - helping the perpetrator to understand the suffering of the victim. This is very different from the notion of retributive justice." His PhD thesis is on reconciliation in Rwanda.

Thanking Michael for his talk, Dr Francis commented that at the School of Peace Studies, "we are inclined to work with [academic] abstractions. This is the first time I am forced to listen without abstraction."

Earlier that day, Michael and I visited Bradford's Interfaith Education Centre where his book and *For A Change* magazine are available as resources for religious education teachers in the multicultural city.

**Michael Smith**

*The new edition of Michael's book will be available in the New Year. Meanwhile, copies of the existing edition are available from Grosvenor Books at a reduced price of £5 plus £1 postage.*

## **MEDIA IMPACT ON SOCIETY**

### **Aberdeen**

A civic reception in the Town House started off an eight-day programme for the International Communications Forum (ICF) in three major cities in Scotland. The visitors were welcomed by the Deputy Lord Provost at the reception attended by representatives of the civic life of the city, academia and the media. The following day church and television personalities were amongst those who attended a day-long forum on The Impact of the Media on Society. It was hosted by the Aberdeen branch of the Christian Socialist Movement (CSM) in association with the Robert Gordon University (RGU), and was opened by the Lord Provost, Dr Margaret Smith. The ICF panel also spoke to fifty of the RGU students.

The presence of Martyn Lewis, broadcaster and journalist, contributed to the interest at all the events and resulted in two articles with pictures in the *Press & Journal*. The visitors later had a long inter-



**Dr Margaret Smith, Lord  
Provost of Aberdeen**

view with the Editor of the *Press & Journal*.

### **Edinburgh**

Seventy people attended a public meeting put on by the Edinburgh branch of CSM in which Magnus Linklater, former Editor of *The Scotsman* and now a feature writer in *The Times*, participated. Earlier in the day the panel took part in a two-hour session with post-graduate and final year students of Napier University's School of Communication Arts, followed by lunch with the Head of the School and staff.

### **Glasgow**

A lively question and answer session at a Media Symposium with the Principal and students took place at Caledonian University. The visitors then met Councillor Bashir Maan,



**Magnus Linklater addressing  
the students in Edinburgh**

Photos: Blair Cummock

Chairman of both the Police Board and the National Association of Pakistanis, at his office in the City Chambers. The Scottish visit ended with a dinner in Glasgow City Chambers hosted by the Lord Provost, Alex Mosson.

**Kath Moir**

## JOTHAM VALLEY IN CONCERT

London, November 3

Based on the true story of two ranching brothers in Nevada, who solved their family feud over water rights in a spirit of honest apology and forgiveness, the musical has lost none of its power to move people to laughter and tears.

Written by Cecil Broadhurst, Frances Hadden and George Fraser, Jotham Valley first toured in 1951, playing on Broadway, NY, and Miami, Florida, and later in India and Europe.

The 13-strong cast, under the musical direction of Noel Tredinnick, gave us the sweep and lilt of the original music with professionalism, gusto and style. The dialogue adapted and coached by Hugh Williams maintained the storyline and drama with power and impact.

This reviewer was one of several in



The brothers, Seth and Goth

the audience who had been part of the original production, so it was inspiring to see the conviction with which these actors told the story. One could only wish that time and resources might one day be mobilised to present the full show once again, with scenery, costume, lighting and all. There are many "brothers" in the world today who could do so much more for the "valley" if they worked together, forgiving each other the hurts of the past.

As a step towards this goal a rehearsal CD with sheet music and script has been prepared as a packet available to anyone who wishes to mount a similar concert presentation in their local area. If you are interested, contact Stanley Kiaer, Westminster Productions, at 24 Greencoat Place.

Ray F Purdy



The ladies of the valley

Photos: David Channer

## "A BREATH OF FRESH AIR"

At our meeting on November 19, the Council of Management of The Oxford Group decided that MRA's new name in Britain will be '**Initiatives of Change – for moral and spiritual renewal**'.

In the shock, confusion and fear which followed the events of September 11, I remember thinking 'Is this what my parents felt like in 1938/1939?' The world is so different from the one in which the name Moral Re-Armament was adopted 64 years ago - and yet the feeling of standing on the edge of an abyss and the belief that hope lies in action that stems from deep inner change are, I imagine, very similar. And just as 'moral re-armament' spoke to the

need of those days, so 'initiatives of change for moral and spiritual renewal' are needed today as never before.

This newsletter's deadline means that I am writing only a few days after the decision was made. Plans are brewing (but not yet ready to be decanted) for a fitting launching, linked to significant new initiatives. Meanwhile, one correspondent writes, 'If this decision is going to stimulate re-appraisal of what we have to offer I see stimulating and exhilarating days ahead. I sense a breath of fresh air and considerable challenge to reclaim the expectation of miracles, which I have perhaps lost a bit over the last years.'

Mary Lean

## MEDITERRANEAN

### DIALOGUE II

Malta, October 25-31

In the turmoil that followed September 11 and continuing violence in the Middle East, it was a difficult moment to meet.

In the event 40 people spent three days together in the Mount St Joseph Jesuit centre overlooking the bay where St Paul was once shipwrecked. Twenty Maltese were joined by a similar number from eight Mediterranean countries and other parts of Europe. Among them were Senator Giovanni Bersani, Italy, Dr. Cornelio Sommarugia,

Switzerland, Imam Abduljalil Sajid, UK, and two university lecturers with a senior journalist from Egypt. From Lebanon two Greek Orthodox Christians came, one of them Assaad, the former militia commander, in company with a Shia Muslim.

At the opening former Maltese President, Vincent Tabone, spoke, as also did Dr George Vella, deputy leader of the Labour Party. At table we were served by the Jesuit brothers who were praying for us in their daily devotions, creating an aura of healing in our sessions where, at times, painful feelings had to be expressed. One day the Prime